
CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT NEWSLETTER FOR HEALTHY OUTCOMES

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M.C. 24-12,100 North Academy Avenue, Danville, Pa. 17822 Phone: (570) 271-7240 Fax: (570) 271-7241

Website: <http://www.geisinger.org/bcqu>

What Is Cholesterol And How Does It Affect Me?

From MerckSource.com

Cholesterol is a substance that your body needs to function; in fact, it is essential for life. You need cholesterol to form cell membranes, many hormones and bile acids (which help to digest fat), to name just a few examples. Without cholesterol, you couldn't live. But, as is so often the case, *too much* cholesterol can do you harm.

When you have high levels of cholesterol in your blood, you're at greater risk of heart disease -- and the greater the cholesterol level, the greater your risk. Given that heart disease is currently the No. 1 killer of both men and women in the United States, this isn't a risk that you should ignore. However, eating in a heart-healthy way, being physically active and losing weight (if you are overweight) are things everyone can do to lower their cholesterol levels and their risk.

Types of cholesterol

Your doctor may order tests to check your blood levels of cholesterol. Since cholesterol can't dissolve in the blood (it's not water-soluble), it doesn't circulate by itself. Instead, cholesterol travels through the bloodstream linked to "carriers" called lipoproteins.

There are several different types of lipoproteins. The two that are most important to remember in terms of your possible risk of heart disease are high-density lipoproteins (HDL) and low-density lipoproteins (LDL).

Cholesterol that is linked to low-density lipoproteins is called LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol). Higher levels of LDL cholesterol are associated with an *increased* risk for heart disease. Cholesterol molecules that are linked to high-density lipoproteins are called HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol). If you have higher levels of HDL cholesterol, you're at *lower* risk for heart disease.

Can't remember which cholesterol is "bad" and which is "good?" Try this as a way to remind yourself: LDL cholesterol ("bad") is *low-down* (and rotten!). HDL cholesterol ("good") comes *highly recommended*.

"Good" and "bad" cholesterol

Why should one type of cholesterol be "good", putting people at lower risk for heart disease, and another "bad"? Because LDL is the main "carrier" of cholesterol *to* body tissues, and HDL "carries" cholesterol *away from* body tissues.

When you have a lot of LDL cholesterol in the bloodstream, there is a greater danger that too much may be deposit in artery walls, which may then become damaged. The arteries may develop a cholesterol and fatty buildup on the inside, called atherosclerosis or "hardening of the arteries".

Cholesterol buildup narrows the arteries, prevents adequate amounts of blood from flowing to the heart and may lead to complete blockage of an artery. It is the most common cause of heart disease, and it happens so slowly that you are not even aware of it. The higher your LDL cholesterol, the greater your chance of this buildup.

Higher levels of HDL cholesterol in your blood means that more high-density lipoproteins are carrying cholesterol away from arterial walls and back to the liver. The liver then breaks the cholesterol molecules down, in preparation for their elimination from the body. Clearly, the more this happens, the less likely cholesterol is to accumulate within arterial walls and worsen the progression of atherosclerosis.

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Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness

From PA Department of Health

The best defense is prevention. Here are some prevention tips:



- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar—these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library—even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on:
 - Infants and young children
 - People aged 65 or older
 - People who have a mental illness
 - Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure
- Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. Warning: If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage. Remember the warning in the first “tip” (above), too.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say “broad spectrum” or “UVA/UVB protection” on their labels).

What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)?

H1N1 flu (swine flu) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses that regularly cause outbreaks of influenza in pigs. The virus typically does not infect humans - only 12 cases reported in the U.S. between December 2005 and February 2009. As with seasonal flu, the CDC believes H1N1 flu (swine flu) may be spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing or a person may become infected by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Symptoms

The symptoms associated with H1N1 flu (swine flu) closely resemble those of regular human flu. They include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with H1N1 flu (swine flu) have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

If you have symptoms, first consult with your health care provider and they will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed. Additionally, if you experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care:*

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Treatment

There are antiviral medicines available to treat and prevent H1N1 flu (swine flu). The two antiviral drugs the CDC recommends for treatment of H1N1 flu (swine flu) are [Tamiflu®](#) (oseltamivir) and [Relenza®](#) (zanamivir). Both medications require a prescription. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

Prevention: There are simple everyday steps you can take to help prevent the spread of influenza

- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 10-15 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after you sneeze or cough.
- Keep living or work areas clean by using household detergents (e.g. hand soap, dishwashing liquid) and sanitize surfaces with bleach or alcohol.
- Avoid contact with others who are sick. If you are sick, stay home from work or school.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Can I get H1N1 flu (swine flu) from eating or preparing pork?

No, H1N1 flu (swine flu) viruses are not spread by food and you cannot get H1N1 flu (swine flu) from consuming cooked pork products.

How can H1N1 flu (swine flu) be diagnosed?

A respiratory specimen would need to be collected within the first 4 to 5 days of illness. Identification as a H1N1 flu (swine influenza A virus) requires the specimen be sent to CDC for laboratory testing.

Teenagers with the flu can take medicines without aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin® trademarks), to relieve symptoms. Children younger than 2 years of age should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a healthcare provider.

*Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/swineflu accessed April 28, 2009)

Salmonellosis Fact Sheet

From PA Dept of Health

What is Salmonellosis? Salmonellosis is an infection caused by Salmonella bacteria that generally affects the intestinal tract, and occasionally the bloodstream and other organs. It is one of the more common causes of bacterial gastroenteritis (diarrhea and/or vomiting) with approximately 2,000 cases reported each year in Pennsylvania. Most cases occur in the summer months, and are seen as single cases, clusters or outbreaks.

How do people become infected by Salmonella? - People become infected by Salmonella by either eating or drinking contaminated food or water, by contact with infected people or animals, or through contact with contaminated environmental sources.

What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis? - People with Salmonellosis may experience mild or severe diarrhea, fever and occasionally vomiting. The diarrhea can be bloody. They may be infected, but without symptoms. Bloodstream infections can be quite serious, particularly in the very young or elderly. Some forms of Salmonella can cause urinary infections.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear? - The symptoms generally appear 1 to 3 days after exposure.

Where are Salmonella bacteria found? - Salmonella bacteria are widely distributed in our food chain and environment. The organisms often contaminate raw meats, eggs, unpasteurized milk and cheese products. Other sources of exposure include contact with infected pet turtles and other reptiles, pet chicks, dogs and cats.

Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from work or school? - Food handlers, health care workers, and workers and children in a child care setting should not work or attend child care while having active diarrhea. Since Salmonella bacteria are shed in the feces, people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (infants, young children, certain handicapped individuals, for example) should be isolated. Most infected people may return to work or school when their stools become formed provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. Food handlers, health care workers, and workers and children in a day care setting should obtain the approval of the local or state health department before returning to their routine activities.

What is the treatment for Salmonellosis? - Most people with Salmonellosis will recover on their own or may require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics and antidiarrheal drugs are generally not recommended for typical cases with intestinal infections. Antibiotics may be indicated for more complicated cases, especially bloodstream infections.

How can Salmonellosis be prevented? -

- a. Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly:
 - (1) Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
 - (2) Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
 - (3) Cutting boards and counters used for preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
 - (4) Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats.
 - (5) Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached particularly when using a microwave.
- b. Avoid eating raw eggs or undercooking foods containing raw eggs.
- c. Avoid drinking raw milk, or undercooking foods containing raw milk.
- d. Encourage careful hand washing before and after food preparation.
- e. Make sure those who handle pets of all kinds, properly attend to hand washing.



The information offered in this newsletter is to increase your awareness of health related conditions and situations and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. If you believe you or someone you support has a condition, please seek the advice of a physician.